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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine and compare the drop or withdrawal policies of the 29 tax-supported community colleges in Michigan, and to determine whether Macomb County Community College (MCCC) will have proportionately more hours dropped than most. As MCCC does not require formal withdrawal applications, permits withdrawal at any time, does not convert withdrawals to failures, does not compel instructors to issue failing grades or prohibit them from recording a withdrawal rather than a failing grade, this was expected. Nine distinct withdrawal policies were revealed in the college catalogs: no distinction made between withdrawal-passing and withdrawal-failing (5 colleges' policy); no distinction made, but withdrawals prohibited after a certain date (4); mark for withdrawal-passing and withdrawal prior to evaluation (3); withdrawal to a given date, thereafter a distinction made between withdrawal-passing or withdrawal-failing (2); distinction between withdrawal-passing and withdrawal-failing after the drop-add period (5); withdrawal to a given date, thereafter either a withdrawal passing or a failing grade, the failing grade being calculated in the grade point average (7); withdrawal or failure regardless of time of withdrawal (1); separate grade indicating withdrawal after a certain date (1); and failing grade for withdrawal beyond a given date (1). (MB)

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MACOMB COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# Withdrawal Policies of Michigan's Public Community Colleges

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Department of Research

MACOMB COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH

# WITHDRAWAL POLICIES OF MICHIGAN'S PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Project No. 78036
March, 1978
Edward Breen
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## INTRODUCTION

In February, 1978, Project No. 78027, "Grading Policies of the Two-Year Community Colleges in Michigan, Fall 1977" was prepared by the Research Department at the request of the Presidential Staff. Among the grading policies covered were the policies regarding withdrawals or dropped credit hours. On March 7, 1978, the Presidential Staff requested further detail on withdrawal policies. This report has been prepared in compliance with that request.

## OVERVIEW

The source for the earlier report was the most recent catalog then on hand, confirmed by phone with the institutions involved. Since that report was prepared, many of the most recent catalogs have been obtained. They are the sources for this report. That verbal reports from the Registrar's Office or Student Academic Services differ from the policy as delineated in the most recent catalog is, perhaps, an indication that these policies are not always executed as they are written.

Withdrawal policies are concerned mostly with the timing of a withdrawal and the assigning of a grade to the student. These policies are related, as, at almost half of the community colleges, the student's grade after withdrawal is affected by the date of the withdrawal.

In general, a student is given a period in which he may add or drop classes. Courses officially dropped during this period are not

entered in the student's record in any form. After this period, most schools allow the student to withdraw with the appropriate grade through the last day of classes or, in some cases, through the date of the final examination. At seven schools there is a date beyond which a student must finish the course or receive a grade based on the relationship of the work he has completed to the course requirements. In unusual circumstances, however, this grading may be waived.

At nine schools, there is no distinguishing mark to indicate the quality of the student's work at the time of withdrawal. Four of these schools, though, prohibit withdrawals after a certain time in a term.

Nine schools allow a student a period during which he may drop courses without distinction. After that date, two schools make a distinction between withdrawal-passing (WP) and withdrawal-failing (WF). At the other seven, a student who is not doing satisfactory work at the time of withdrawal receives a failing grade which is calculated in the grade point average.

Seven schools make distinctions based on the quality of work from the end of the drop-add period. At three of these, the distinction is between a student who withdraws while he is passing and one who withdraws before he can be evaluated. Five schools distinguish between withdrawal-passing and withdrawal-failing. Only one school in in this category gives a student who is doing unsatisfactory work a failing grade.

Finally, two schools have policies unique to them. St. Clair gives any student who withdraws beyond a particular date a failing grade unless there are extenuating circumstances. If so, the instructor may elect to give the student a "W" to indicate withdrawal.

Kellogg gives any student who withdraws after the fourteenth week of classes an "N" grade, indicating only late withdrawal.

## SPECIFIC POLICIES

Listed here are the policies as taken from the most recent catalogs. Schools with similar policies are grouped.

### No Distinction Made

Kalamazoo Valley - A "W" is given if a student withdraws from a course after drop-add period.

Kirtland - "W" grade is assigned if a student withdraws with the consent of the instructor and the Registrar's Office. This grade is to be used only to improve the student's schedule.

Washtenaw - "W" indicates withdrawal and may be given any time prior to the final examination with the permission of the student's advisor or counselor.

Wayne - "WP" indicates official withdrawal only and may be given any time during the term.

Westshore - "WP" indicates the student has dropped or withdrawn after the first week and has filed the necessary application.

### No Distinction Made: Withdrawals Prohibited After a Certain Date

Highland Park - "W" indicating withdrawal is issued before the end of the eleventh week of classes during a full term or the sixth week of the summer session. After that date a student must finish the term unless unusual circumstances prevent it.

Jackson - "WP" indicates withdrawal-passing and may be initiated any time during the first two-thirds of a term.

Lansing - A student may withdraw any time before the end of the fourth week of classes. After that, a letter grade is issued by the instructor.

Southwestern - "WP" indicates that a student withdrew from the course during the first four weeks of classes. After that, a grade is assigned by the instructor. In unusual circumstances, a student may petition

for a "WP" or "WF" after the 4th week. However, a "WF" is averaged in the grade point average.

Mark for Withdrawal-Passing or Withdrawal Prior to Judgement

Oakland - "W" indicates withdrawal when there is not enough basis for evaluation. "WP" indicates a student was doing passing work at the time of withdrawal. A student may withdraw any time prior to one week before the end of classes.

Macomb - "WP" indicates a student was passing at the time of withdrawal. "N" indicates a student withdrew before mid-term and the instructor could make no evaluation.

Schoolcraft - "W" indicates a student withdrew from the class. "WP" indicates a student was doing passing work at the time of withdrawal. A student may withdraw any time up to ten days before the end of fall or winter term classes or five days before the end of spring or summer classes.

Withdrawal to a Given Date: Thereafter a Distinction Made Between Withdrawal-Passing or Withdrawal-Failing

Alpena - "W" is given to a student who withdraws during the first eight weeks. After that, a student must have the written permission of the instructor and will receive either withdrawal-passing or withdrawal-failing.

Gogebic - A student may drop any course without receiving a grade until 20 days after the end of the last registration period (WN). From that date until three weeks prior to the end of the semester, a student must have the permission of the Dean of Students to withdraw. Then he receives one of three grades: "W" (withdrawal without evaluation), "WP" (withdrawal-passing), and "WF" (withdrawal-failing).

Distinction Between Withdrawal-Passing and Withdrawal-Failing From the End of the End of the Drop-Add Period

Grand Rapids - A student is given an "N" if the withdrawal is made while failing or a "W" if it is made while passing.

Lake Michigan - "WP" (withdrawal-passing) or "WF" (withdrawal-failing) may be given any time up to the last day of classes.

Mid-Michigan - "WP" or "WF" (withdrawal-passing or withdrawal-failing) may be given any time up to the last day of classes. The instructor has the option to give any grade in place of the "WP" or "WF".

Montcalm - "W" indicates withdrawal-failing and "F" indicates withdrawal-passing. (Montcalm uses "E" to indicate a failing grade).

Muskegon - A student may withdraw any time until the last day of classes. If he has clearly demonstrated that he would fail or has exceeded the allotted number of absenses, a "WF" (withdrawal-failing) is given. Otherwise a "WP" (withdrawal-passing) or "W" (withdrawal) is given.

Withdrawal to a Given Date: Thereafter Either a Withdrawal-Passing or a Failing Grade, the Failing Grade Being Calculated in the Grade Point Average

Bay de Noc - A student may withdraw within the first four weeks without penalty. After the 4th week, a student may withdraw without penalty under special circumstances with the permission of the instructor. Normally, if a student withdraws after the fourth week, he is given either a "WP" (withdrawal-passing) or an "F" (failing).

C. S. Mott - Prior to the "date of record" (listed in school calendar for each term), a student may withdraw without penalty. After that date, either a "W" (withdrawal) or an "E" (failing) is recorded.

Delta - During the first week, no grade is recorded for a withdrawal (WN). During the second through tenth weeks a "W" (withdrawal) grade is given. After the tenth week, a withdrawal is recorded as "W" or "E" (failing), depending on the student's work at the time of withdrawal.

Glen Oaks - If a student drops a course any time during the first 40 percent of the academic period, an automatic "WP" (withdrawal-passing) is recorded for the course. During the remainder or the session, the instructor assigns a grade of "WP" or "F" (failing), depending on a student's work up to that time.

Henry Ford - Until the end of the tenth week, a "DR" - dropped without prejudice, is recorded for a withdrawal. After the end of the tenth week, the instructor assigns an "E" (failing) or "DR" on the basis of the student's work.

Monroe - Courses dropped during the first week do not appear on a student's record. If a course is dropped during the second, third, and fourth weeks, an automatic "W" (withdrawal) is recorded. For courses dropped after the fourth week, the instructor assigns either a "W" or an "E" (failing grade).

Northwestern - Until the end of the fifth week, a "W" (withdrawal) is given. After the fifth week, a student who withdraws from a course is given either a "0.0" or "W" depending on the quality of work to the time of withdrawal.

Withdrawal or Failure Regardless of Time of Withdrawal

North Central - At the time of withdrawal, a student must have the instructor assign either a grade of "WP" if all work to date is passing or "F" if it is failing.

Separate Grade Indicating Withdrawal After a Certain Date

Kellogg - "W" indicates withdrawal before the end of the fourteenth week or complete withdrawal from the college. After the fourteenth week, an "N" (no grade), which is not calculated in the grade point average, is given. No "N" grades are given in the summer or interim sessions.

Failing Grade for Withdrawal Beyond a Given Date

St. Clair - "W" indicates withdrawal from a course or from the college before the end of the twelfth week. An "E" is given for all courses dropped beyond the twelfth week; in extenuating circumstances a "W" may be issued.

## CONCLUSION

In Act No. 97 of the Public Acts of 1977, the State of Michigan required the 29 tax supported community colleges of the State to report all student credit hours dropped, failed, or not completed.

The purpose of this study was to examine and compare the drop or withdrawal policies of the 29 colleges and determine whether or not is is inevitable that Macomb County Community College will report proportionately more hours dropped than most and perhaps all of the others. From the study it is clear that Macomb is very likely to have more hours withdrawn or dropped than any other school. Reasons for such a conclusion are plentiful.

Macomb does not require a student to make a formal application to withdraw. It permits withdrawal at any time, even after the final class. It does not convert any withdrawals to failures. It does not compel an instructor to issue a failing grade under specified circumstances. Finally, it does not prohibit an instructor from recording a withdrawal rather than the pejorative failure.

On the other hand, one can judge from the study that 24 of the colleges at least have policies which lead to a greater number of failures than are likely at Macomb. Some automatically fail the student who drops without completing a prescribed precedure. Some prohibit withdrawals after an announced date, forcing students to fail courses and compelling instructors to record failures.

Two of these colleges, however, seem to have found a way to reduce the drops they must report. Bay de Noc Community College Catalog,

1977-1978, says a ". . . student may withdraw from a class within the first four weeks of each term without penalty of grading."[1] In context with the rest of the academic procedures there,[2] it seems that such a student cannot be reported as having dropped.

When a student withdraws at Mid-Michigan, an instructor may record a withdrawal; if he wishes, however, he may instead record a passing or failing grade.[3] Such a policy is not explicit elsewhere. Yet it seems safe to assume that many instructors, including some at Macomb, in fact do enter grades rather than withdrawals in the records of certain students who withdraw. The number doing so at Macomb might increase if such a policy were official.

Whatever the approved policy at a school, candid conversation with instructors will reveal that policy does not always prevail. Some instructors will bend the rules, doing all they can to avoid failures and to substitute withdrawals. Others have the opposite philosophy. And the same statements are true of entire faculties. In consequence, reports of drops are perhaps best judged only together with reports of failures. Considered in isolation, they are not nearly so significant.

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[1]Page 12.

[2]Page 11 and 12.

[3]Telephone conversation with a Mid-Michigan staff member.